

News release April 17, 2012

99 waters to be added to special watch category for phosphorus impacts

Public comment accepted through May 18, 2012

MADISON - Ninety-nine lakes and rivers exceeding the state's new numeric phosphorus standards but not experiencing biological impacts to aquatic life – like algal blooms -- are being added to Wisconsin's proposed 2012 list of impaired waters.

The Department of Natural Resources is adding the 99 water bodies to a special new “5P” category that has not been used in Wisconsin’s impaired list before this year. DNR will closely monitor these waters for signs of biological impact and will continue to focus on state impaired waters that are currently experiencing biological impacts.

The public comment period on these proposed additions is open through May 18, 2012.

“Right now, we aren't seeing algal blooms or problems with the fish or insect communities on these waters like we did on the 21 lakes and river segments we originally proposed for listing due to high phosphorus levels,” says Aaron Larson, the DNR water resources management specialist who coordinates updates of the water body list.

However, after reviewing Wisconsin’s impaired waters recommendation, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency has asked DNR to list 121 more lakes or river segments because they exceeded the state's new numeric phosphorus standards, even though available information showed no signs of aquatic life impacts, including harmful algal blooms. DNR is seeking comment from the public before finalizing the list. Under the federal Clean Water Act, all states are required to submit to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency every two years a list of water bodies that do not meet water quality standards.

In developing its original proposed list of waters that did not meet water quality, DNR had determined a water should be listed as impaired if phosphorus levels exceeded the new numeric phosphorus standards and if other biological information verified that aquatic life or recreation were impaired as a result of phosphorus. Most other states list water bodies based solely on biological standards. This is the first time Wisconsin is using the “5P” category to identify a water body for listing solely because sampling exceeded numeric standards. Wisconsin is currently the only state to have adopted numeric phosphorus standards for both rivers and lakes.

DNR staff reviewed the available data again on the lakes and river segments EPA wanted re-examined and recommended that 99 more waters be listed for the first time in a special “5P” category. Twenty-three waters that EPA asked DNR to consider will not be included in the new category because DNR staff concluded the high phosphorus levels were likely temporary, due to the floods in 2007-2008.

Excessive phosphorus levels can grow harmful algae, excessive plants and muddy water in many lakes and rivers and is one of Wisconsin's most common causes of water quality problems. It can also harm fish and insect communities and other parts of the food web.

The 30-day public comment period on the revised list will run from April 17 to May 18, 2012. A small number of other updates were made to the list in response to public comments, and are also available for public review. Search the DNR website for [impaired waters](#) and click on the button for [View 2012 list](#) of modified waters, as well as the rest of the list that is being submitted to EPA. Comments on these new listing updates may be submitted via e-mail through May 18, 2012, to DNRImpairedwaters@wisconsin.gov or by U.S. mail to Aaron Larson, DNR, Water Evaluation Section (WT/3), P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Aaron Larson – 608-264-6129; Nicki Clayton – 608-266-0152